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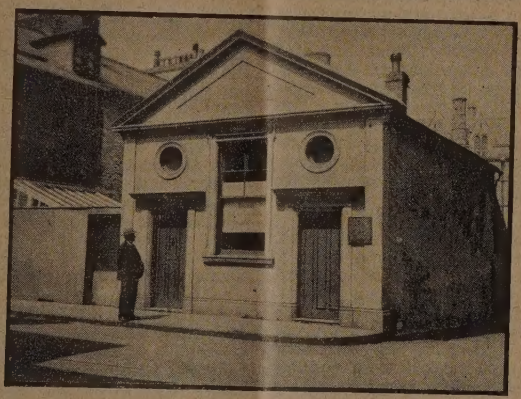
A MAGAZINE FOR FREE CHRISTIANS



OUR SEASIDE CHURCHES

THE NEW STREET MEETING HOUSE, ABERYSTWYTH

The first efforts at Unitarian missionary work at Aberystwyth were carried out under official aegis in the closing years of last century, when two distinguished Unitarian Ministers delivered public lectures in the town.

It was in 1902 that the first regular services were organised by co-operation between students and a few Unitarians resident in the town. Ever since, services have been held without interruption, although for many years the little flock had no permanent meeting place of its own.

Among the early workers who played a very prominent part may be mentioned J. Park Davies, a student who acted as secretary and later entered the Unitarian Ministry and finally became Principal of the Presbyterian College, Carmarthen; and the family of the Rev. D. L. Evans (one time Professor at the Presbyterian College). Professor Evan's son George Eyre Evans would be widely known to an earlier generation as the author of several books of historical interest to Unitarians. He was for many years the mainstay of the congregation. Without his very great help the church might well have perished. Whilst his home was at Aberystwyth his work lay largely some 50 odd miles away at Carmarthen. Yet in the early years he never failed to return to attend and generally to conduct services on Sundays. This he did as a labour of love and no gratitude to him can be too great.

From the time of the pioneering efforts to the present day the Sunday meetings have been largely con-

ducted by members of the congregation, though ordained ministers have for varying periods been responsible for the services. At least three of the latter have been full-time ministers of the congregation. The first of these was the Rev. J. Marles Thomas, M.A., now Secretary of the South Wales Unitarian Association. He began his ministerial career at Aberystwyth as did also the Rev. D. Jacob Davies, B.A., the present editor of the Ymofynnydd (the Welsh equivalent of the Inquirer). At present the congregation is fortunate in having the part-time service of the Rev. J. H. Coram Davies, B.A. Vacancies are mainly filled by members of the congregation.

The congregation, it is observed, is not an entirely typical one: it fluctuates more in numbers and character than most of our congregations. The reasons for this are fairly obvious. The numbers of Unitarian students in residence have varied from time to time and their zeal too. What then, one may ask, is the value of such a congregation in such a (University) town as Aberystwyth? Here is the answer.

Our cause, though relatively small in numbers, holds open the door to anyone interested in liberal religious thought. It has afforded experience to Unitarian students preparing for the Ministry. It has provided direct entrance to a full-time Ministry to some of our students. It has received into membership a considerable number of converts. Roughly half of its present members are in that category. It is not insignificant that at least two Unitarian Ministers listed in the Year Book of the General Assembly were trained at the local Calvinistic Theological College.

The congregation is now looking forward to a period of further useful activity. For upwards of 50 years it has worshipped in a rented building, but recently it has acquired the freehold of its Meeting House.

The Committee extends the warmest welcome to visitors who may feel disposed to attend the Sunday services during holidays.

UNITARIANISM IN THE ISLE OF WIGHT

By John R. Sturges

It is not often that a lay pastor has received nearly £2,500 during the first few months of his ministry, but that has been the experience of Mr. Derek Stirman, the newly appointed lay pastor of our Newport Church in the Isle of Wight.

In August last year the Rev. W. J. Carter, M.A., died. He had been minister at Newport for nine years and during the last few months, when seriously ill in a Portsmouth hospital, had met Derek Stirman, a young layman from our Portsmouth church. They had discussed the Unitarian ministry and Derek Stirman was encouraged to make application for admission to Manchester College, Oxford in October 1961. Upon the death of Rev. W. J. Carter the suggestion that Derek Stirman should serve as lay pastor of our Newport Church for one year, was accepted, and he gave up his employment and went to live in Newport and commenced his ministry in November of last year. Within a few days it was decided to call in an architect, himself a Unitarian, to survey the church premises, and although it was expected that some repairs would be necessary, no one was prepared for the grim report that was presented. The buildings were in a serious condition and the roof might not survive the winter gales, and this along with other essential work, would probably cost £3,500 to restore. The small Newport congregation under the leadership of their able Chairman, Councillor Mrs. W. A. Christy, met with their young lay pastor to consider what could be done. Everyone agreed that the Newport Church had a long and honorable tradition

that must not be allowed to lapse. Moreover, since it was the only Unitarian Church in an important holiday centre, it was vital to the denomination that it should not close. It was therefore decided to try and raise a sum of £3,500 and Derek Stirman became Secretary of the Appeal Committee. Immediately the response was remarkable and generous Unitarians were discovered throughout the length and breadth of the British Isles. The Revs. John Kielty and Mortimer Rowe rallied to the support of our Newport congregation. Churches far and wide sent donations, and gifts were received from generous friends with the result that so far, nearly £2,500 has been sent or promised, and there seems every prospect that our Church at Newport will remain open to begin another chapter in Unitarian witness in the Isle of Wight.

Our Newport friends have been greatly encouraged by all of this and so also has Derek Stirman. The challenge of the Newport situation was just what was needed to bring the best out of this somewhat unorthodox young man. He had found his way into Unitarianism through a long religious enquiry, and upon joining our church at Portsmouth, became the leader of its Youth Club and immediately showed remarkable aptitude for dealing with young people. But an easy going humour belies the need to give himself to some serious, constructive, piece of work. The sacrifice he has made in order to help our Newport church has satisfied a need in him, as well as greatly assisting a struggling church in its time of difficulty.

£1,000
STILL NEEDED BY OUR NEWPORT CHURCH

Donations, please, to Mr. W. A. Christy, J.P., c/o, The Manse, 109, Castle Road, Newport, Isle of Wight.

If you are on holiday in the Isle of Wight have a look at our Church at Newport, so recently reprieved, and call in and see its unconventional lay pastor.

"I HAD FAINTED UNLESS" . . .

by J. Martin Hall

Before the welfare state or the New English Bible had arrived, the artist, Arthur Wragg, in black and white, put the psalms "into modern dress." Above the text, "I had fainted unless I had believed in the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living" (Psalm 27.13) he drew a penniless widow wrapped up in her chair, a kettle perched on a Valor Perfection stove, a dog asking for food by its empty plate, bare boards and a letter containing bad news on her knees. There she sat, palely mumbling and mouthing these words. We've all got to believe in something. However poor and low we get we all know we are lost unless we can still wonder and hope and believe.

M. L. Jacks, noted son of Dr. L. P. Jacks, told this story at the Channing School Jubilee just over a year ago. People had got pretty well everything they required. Unlike the little widow, for them their earthly needs were supplied. Still they were restless and without joy. What was it all for? For what purpose do we live? As never before they were in a cloud of doubt about God. At length they decided to put a man into space to look round and report back. If there were no God then they decided they had better put an end to it once and for all.

The man was put into space and after a good hunt round he reported back that as far as he could see there was no God; however, this was not final: he was still looking round. The people below felt this was enough. They acted promptly and lit the fuse and blew the whole thing up. Everyone perished. Every-

one, that is, except the man who went up into space. He was saved. He was looking round. He had not quite lost hope.

Whether we express the truth of this parable in these words of the Psalmist, "I had fainted unless" . . . or in St. Paul's words, "He that endureth unto the end, the same shall be saved," or in the words of our Wayside Pulpit, "When you come to the end of your tether, tie a knot in it and hang on," it does not matter; it is all one. We must still have hope; we must still be looking round; we must still be inquirers. Whether we live in squalor or in the affluent society, it is all the same; if we have that element of spiritual vigilance in our composition which makes us still look round, under God, the light at last will come. "All things work together for good to those who love God." The clouds at last will disperse or at least we shall surmount them.

CHILDREN'S CORNER

RAYMOND DOES A GOOD TURN

As Raymond has himself pointed out, he is not *always* wrong; there *are* times when he is blameless. He admits that they don't occur very often, but ephasises that they *do* occur. There was the other Saturday, for instance, when Mother began to get a little worried.

"Now, where can Raymond have got to?" she said. "I told him to be back by half-past twelve. His lunch will be spoiled. Well, we shan't wait any longer. Just see if he's coming, Lisbeth: if he's not, his plate can go back in the oven and he must take pot-luck."

Lisbeth went to the front door, then down the path and on to the pavement. She looked up and down the road, ran quickly to the corner, but could see no sign of her brother. She returned to the house.

"I can't see him, Mum," she said.

"It will serve him right if his lunch is cold," said Mother. "He wouldn't get away with it if your father was home. Now, sit down to yours while it's still eatable."

Tney sat down and begun the meal.

"He only went to Sam's," mentioned Lisbeth, "to see the stamp collection."

"I'll stamp collection him when he comes," Mother said firmly.

They heard the click of the gate, the scurry of feet up the path and the crash of the pantry door as it flew open. Raymond, breathless, burst into the room.

"Sorry I'm late, Mum," he gasped.

"Now look Raymond, this is a bit too much," Mother replied. "You promised you'd be back before half-past twelve. It's nearly one o'clock and your lunch is spoiled. Where have you been?"

"I would have been home in time," said Raymond, "but Sam's mother asked me to take some things to old Mrs. Wilkinson on my way home. She's been very ill since yesterday, you know."

"No," said Mother, "I didn't know."

"Sam's mother and one or two other neighbours are looking after her as best they can. I ran a few errands to save them time later on."

There was a pause, then Mother said: "All right, Raymond. I'm very glad you did. I didn't know Mrs. Wilkinson was ill. I'll go and see her this afternoon. I'm sorry I scolded you because this time you did the right thing. Your lunch won't be much good, now; I'll make you some more."

FANCY!

"It is impossible for any man to know God outside of Jesus Christ"—Billy Graham, Manchester, 1961.

"Fancy it being held by any Christian in the 20th century that the only way of knowing God is through our Lord Jesus Christ! Is God unknowable to those who have never heard of Jesus?"—The Unitarian Monthly, September, 1908.

RECENT PAPER-BACKS FOR HOLIDAY READING

by John Rowland

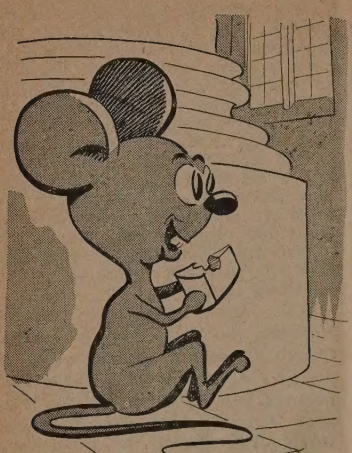
I can never understand why "holiday reading" should necessarily mean light reading, so that on a holiday a person might be thought to read Mr. P. G. Wodehouse but not Dr. C. S. Lewis, Agatha Christie but not Graham Greene. I see no reason why a serious book should not fit into a holiday pattern—indeed, it may fit in well, in that most of us on holiday have a little more time for reading, and if we are sampling some serious author we can devote more attention to him. In any event "holiday reading" in what I now put before my readers, is not merely light reading.

For instance, Messrs. Allen and Unwin have recently started a series of paper-backs which they call "Unwin Books." In this series there are a number of striking books, of which perhaps the most striking are three or four by Bertrand Russell — *The Conquest of Happiness*, (6s.). *In Praise of Idleness* (6s.). *Marriage and Morals* (6s.), and *Power* (6s.). The last-named is the most important I think, of these works. There are many things about the outlook of Bertrand Russell on which we should disagree; but his analysis of the modern world where, in his view, the search for power is the overwhelming motive, is one which many religous people would readily accept.

Two other books in this "Unwin Book" series merit mention also. Dr. Schweitzer's *My Childhood and Yonth* (4s. 6d.) is very simply and straightforwardly written—an outline of the great man's young days, with his own analysis of what drove him to do his wonderful work in Africa. Very different, but equally absorbing is Mr. Christmas Humphreys's *Zen Buddhism* (6s.). That rather odd school of Buddhist thought known as Zen has become almost a fashion in some quarters to-day, and Mr. Christmas Humphreys, who is President of the Buddhist Society, as well as being a very eminent lawyer, does his best to make the ideas of Zen Buddhism understandable to the Western reader. The book is by no means easy going; it may be that the ideas of Zen are difficult to put into words; but I think that the reader who perseveres to the end will get in his mind an outline of what the Zen Buddhists are getting at—though maybe they themselves would say that they are not trying to get at anything at all!

Let me end by recommending two books from a directly Christian background. These are in the new series called "S.C.M. Paperbacks," published by the Student Christian Movement Press. Interesting, though by no means always convincing to a Unitarian, is *Introducing the Christian Faith*, by Dr. A. M. Ramsey, the new Archbishop of Canterbury (3s. 6d.). This contains the text of a series of addresses given last year in Oxford, during a Church Mission in the University. The book reflects, as one would expect, an almost uncritical orthodoxy. But it provides a very interesting impression of the way in which the new leader of the Anglican Communion looks at his faith.

More directly appealing to most modern readers, I think, will be *The Bible in the Age of Science*, by Professor Alan Richardson (5s). Dr. Richardson is Professor of Christian Theology at Nottingham University, and his book, too, is a revised version of a series of lectures—in this case, The Cadbury Lectures given in Birmingham earlier this year. He quite boldly faces the problems set the Biblical student by the developments of modern knowledge, and discusses the influence of many twentieth-century thinkers on the way in which modern people look at the Bible.



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U.Y.P.L. SONG BOOK

"There is delight in singing, tho' none hear beside the singer."—Landor.

Which words draw attention yet again to that curious duality in the English character. For, to persuade many Englishmen to sing, it is necessary to take them to a public house before they will lose sufficient reserve. In contrast, who have expressed the personal delight in singing better than the English with their development of the madrigal and their hey nonny noes and rit fal dals?

This undecided attitude to singing is manifested at international gatherings. Where Germans will produce a guitar and beautiful settings, and Italians jolly tunes, the English will have to huddle together to find one song of common knowledge.

At last, we are given a chance to redeem ourselves. UYPLers, Foyites IRFers, pay homage to those responsible for the U.Y.P.L. song book! Here we have the words of 44 songs all associated with our gatherings. Now we shall know the order of the capacities in "Barley Mow," at least 15 verses of "I ain't gonna grieve," and the words of "Aprite le Porte" where before we knew the sounds only.

It is healthy to note that our irreverence is officially condoned in that, in a religious youth club we are urged to sing "Darkies' Sunday School"; and that it is realised that "Foggy Foggy Dew" and "Snow Sniffers' Lament" are more witty than harmful. We can always end with "This Little Liberal Light" or "Lord of the Wondrous Earth."

The choice of songs is occasionally a little puzzling. Personally I would not have been sorry to see the tired "Ilkla Moor" and "Clementine," omitted, particularly when their place could have been taken by "I have a Rooster," translations of the foreign songs, or the intricate words of "Ta Ta Horse." Nevertheless,

must say that the entire collection is very comprehensive.

It is noteworthy that English songs are often intended for solo performance, American for community singing. Hence it is that 15 songs have crossed the Atlantic into our song book.

I would like to end on a note of caution, a note not at all intended as a criticism of the book. We must never become slaves to this book; it must not be considered appointed for use "in quires and places where they sing." We must keep our repertoire fluid, using the song book for surreptitious reference rather than for word-by-word performance. In this way shall we keep alive genuine folk-song.

And may our memories never fail us, our voices never grow hoarse, and may we continue to sing for our delight.

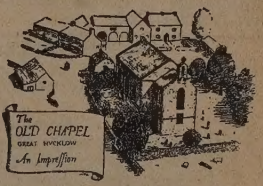
D. B. Needham.

WESTERN UNION AFFAIRS

The Annual Assembly of the Western Union at Cullompton on Saturday, May 27th, was a highly successful gathering. One hundred people attended, representing eighteen of the twenty-three churches in the Union. Miss Freda Clegg (vice-president) presided owing to the regrettable absence of the president (Rev. Randall Jones) through indisposition. Miss Freda Clegg, of Oakfield Road Congregation was appointed President with the Rev. William Millar, of Taunton and Bridgwater, as Vice-President, for the ensuing year.

At the conclusion of the Business meeting the Annual Service took place and was conducted by the Rev. J. Harry Smith, President of the General Assembly. His address was helpful and inspiring. His theme was "What religion is in its simplest and most essential character."

The Annual Meeting of the Western District Annual Women's League was held at Bridgwater on June 7th. Six branches were represented by 46 members. Apologies were received from five other branches. At the business meeting, Mrs. Burnett, the secretary, read a letter of apology and greetings from the outgoing President, Mrs. Whitaker, formerly of Sidmouth and now at Evesham. It was resolved to send a letter of appreciation to her for her valuable services as President during the past two years. Grants to Headquarters and the India Fund were allocated. The following Officers for the coming year were elected: President, Mrs. A. L. Blake; Secretary, Miss A. Maxfield, of Sidmouth; Assistant Secretary, Mrs. G. Burnett, of Bristol; Treasurer, Mrs. Lee, of Bath; Fellowship Secretary, Mrs. E. M. Smith, of Trowbridge. Mrs. Blake on taking the chair and receiving the badge of office from Mrs. Burnett, gave a short address, on the values of Faith, Fellowship and the Future and pleaded for an understanding and encouragement of youth in our movement. The meeting was followed by a short devotional service conducted by Mrs. Chinn, of Bridgwater and addressed by Mrs. Millar, of Taunton.



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UNITARIANS IN THE NEWS

The Rev. J. Martin Hall, current author of our Meditation, has been invited to contribute some talks in the "Thought for To-day," programmes of the General Overseas Service of the B.B.C.

Medical student Michael Dalton, son of the Rev. and Mrs. Dr. Dalton, will be spending part of his summer vacation with Margaret Barr, in India.

Mr. Alan Bates, of Monton, Manchester, was returned as a Liberal member of the local council recently.

At the June quarterly meeting of the Kendal congregation a book token was presented to Dr. V. M. Conway prior to her departure to take up an appointment as Missioner at Mill Street Domestic Mission, Liverpool.

Mr. D. W. Austin, of Knutsford and Mr. Arthur Richardson treasurer of Crediton, received M.B.E's in the Birthday Honours List.

Leicester's vestry chairman, Mr. Ben R. Gimson, has been elected to the committee of the Leicestershire County Cricket Club.

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ALIENATION AND FELLOWSHIP
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NORTH WALES UNITARIAN SOCIETY

Meetings are held at Friends' Meeting House, Erskine Road, Colwyn Bay, at 2.30 p.m. on alternate Saturdays.

CALENDAR

Aug. 5th.—Summer Service.
Aug. 19th.—Rev. Donald Dunkley, of Buxton.
Sept. 2nd.—Rev. Albert Smith, of Knutsford.
Sept. 16th.—Miss C. Herford, of Rhuddlan.
Sept. 30th.—Mr. David Dunn, of Liverpool.

A warm welcome is extended to all visitors.

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